ERASMUS REPORT IOANNINA 2026 (Greece)

My Erasmus traineeship was carried out at the Foundation for Research and Technology – Hellas (FORTH), specifically at the Biomedical Research Institute located in Ioannina, Greece. The traineeship took place over a period of 3 months, from January 15th to April 15th. The institute is a well-established research center with a strong focus on biomedical sciences, offering a multidisciplinary environment that combines molecular biology, neuroscience, and metabolism research.

During my traineeship, I could participated in several ongoing projects within the research group, while also initiating my own small research project that has the potential to develop into a scientific publication. My main responsibilities included performing qPCR analysis and proteomics analysis, as well as contributing to data interpretation using my academic background in metabolism. I was involved in analyzing experimental data from different projects and supporting the team with insights related to metabolic processes and their connection to brain function. In addition, I was embedded in a specific research project focused on in-vivo mouse models (Higth Anxiety Behaviour mice), where behavioral and molecular changes were evaluated after a 30% caloric restriction in order to investigate whether stress and anxiety responses could be improved.

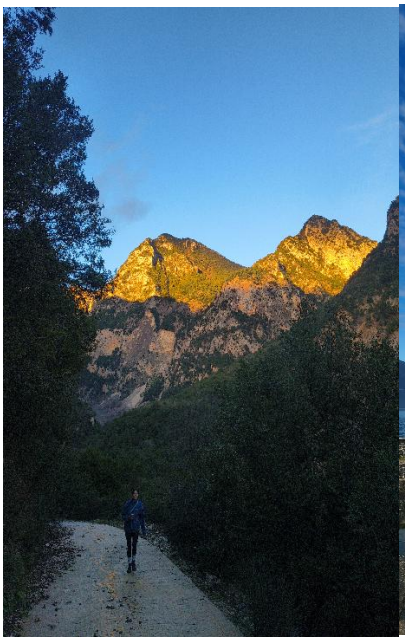
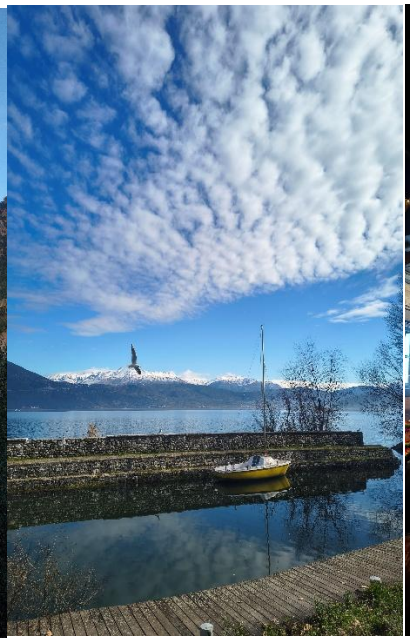
From the very beginning, I was warmly welcomed and fully integrated into the research group. I had the opportunity to work closely with all team members and quickly felt like part of the team. I received continuous mentoring from my supervisor, DR. prof.Michaela Filiou , as well as constant guidance and support from Elissavet Anousi (PhD candidate). Their supervision created a very supportive and motivating environment. Weekly group meetings were held every Monday, where we discussed scientific papers and reviewed recent experimental data. These meetings were particularly valuable for improving my critical thinking and scientific communication skills.

As part of my traineeship, I was required to present my results in a presentation format to the research group. In addition, due to the requirements of my study program, I prepared a written report of my scientific activities and developed a poster presenting the outcomes of my project. This experience helped me significantly improve my ability to communicate scientific results in a clear and professional manner.

During my time at the institute, I gained a wide range of practical and technical skills. I improved my laboratory precision, especially in performing qPCR experiments, and developed strong competencies in proteomics data analysis. I also acquired new bioinformatics skills, including the use of Perseus software, as well as tools for Gene Ontology (GO) term analysis and STRING analysis. These skills allowed me to better interpret complex biological datasets. In terms of knowledge, I strengthened my understanding of the relationship between metabolic disorders, brain function, stress, and anxiety. I now feel confident describing myself as highly skilled in qPCR and knowledgeable in molecular neuroscience and metabolism-related research. On a personal level, my English communication skills were further improved, and I also made significant progress in learning Greek, which I am very proud of.

Before starting my traineeship, I expected to gain hands-on experience with mouse models and to explore a different research environment compared to my previous experience in Germany. I was also interested in observing how it is to work in a research group led by a female principal investigator. These expectations were not only met but exceeded. I was very satisfied with the mentorship I received, and I gained inspiration to continue my academic career through the connections and references I developed during this period. In addition, the region itself had a very positive impact on my overall experience, as I consider it a truly beautiful and inspiring place to live and work.

A minor negative aspect is that the research group may not have access to as many resources as larger institutions, such as those I experienced previously in Germany. However, this was compensated by the creativity and adaptability of the team in overcoming such limitations. On the positive side, the city of Ioannina is extremely student-friendly. The nearby university offers free meals for students, and there are many social and outdoor activities available. While public transportation within the city is sufficient, visiting more remote natural areas may require having a driving license.


Overall, I consider the host institution to be highly professional, supportive, and scientifically diverse.

This traineeship was an extremely valuable academic and personal experience that contributed significantly to my development as a young researcher.